We are nearing the end of our sermon series for this Summer, “Life Lessons from Proverbs through Disney’s Magic.” We have until the end of this month. It has been a great journey of learning using moments from Disney films to illustrate life lessons from Proverbs, exploring themes like wisdom, justice, friendship, and more. Today, the theme is “The Importance of Humility.”

This topic of humility is everywhere in the Book of Proverbs. In fact, one of the most recurring themes is the one of humility versus pride. It champions a life driven by humility and a teachable spirit over a life of arrogance and self-centeredness. And what a better person to preach this sermon than me… (It is a joke)

To put it in context, think of it this way: Imagine walking into a church for worship, Sunday School, or any other activity. You are not there to showcase your accomplishments or to validate your worth. Instead, you step in with an open heart, asking Christ to breathe new life into your soul, to show you a vision greater than your wildest dreams. True humility means we come with an open heart, yearning for God’s wisdom.

Now, imagine walking into a church in the same way, but this time you are there to show off your accomplishments and make sure everyone knows you are above them. You are not there to ask for grace but to give thanks for being better than everyone else. And you don’t miss the opportunity of judging others and making sure they know they are bad or wrong, not like you—of course. Would you call that humility? Of course not, that quality is against everything God is and stands for.

To speak to this, Proverb 15:33 gives us insightful framework, “The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honor.”

Scriptures from across the Bible echo this sentiment too. In Matthew 23:12, we are reminded that the proud will be humbled, and the humble exalted, “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted,” said Jesus. In James 4:6, we learn that God’s grace is reserved for the humble, “But God gives all the more grace; therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” And in 1 Peter 5:5, “And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

We see this process of humility leading to honor in Christ’s journey. For example, the humility Christ showed during the agonies of Good Friday led to the glory and resurrection of Easter Sunday. This same pattern shows in life, like a divine rhythm: from dedicated study comes a degree, from years of practice emerges a masterpiece, and so on. The basic claim in all this is that humility precedes honor. As Jesus said, “all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

To further appreciate this contrast between pride and humility, let’s delve into a story many of you might be familiar with from Disney’s world: the story of “Aladdin.” This Disney film showcases the tension between humility and pride. Aladdin, a young pauper, stumbles upon a magical lamp that grants him three wishes. In his desire to impress Princess Jasmine, he uses a wish to masquerade as “Prince Ali,” celebrated in the song “Prince Ali.”

Here is the moment and the song when this happens, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGLSPyGszjo&feature=youtu.be>

Wow, Aladdin put on a great show. The song is a grand celebration of Aladdin’s transformation into a prince, filled with pomp and extravagance. It represents Aladdin’s choice to elevate himself and show off his new-found status. He wanted to impress the Princess by being seen as a great success and above everyone else. However, he soon learned that genuine worth doesn’t stem from external displays but inner authenticity. Once the Princess learned he lied, she rejected him. It wasn’t until he humbled himself and confessed without expecting anything in return that he found true love and was honored.

Are we more like the boastful Aladdin than Jesus? How would we know? Here are some questions that may help us with this (take a picture of the screen so you can remember them later):

1. “When have we, like Aladdin, worn a mask to fit into what we thought others wanted or expected from us?”
2. “How often do we seek validation from external sources instead of understanding our innate worth in the eyes of God?”
3. “In what areas of our lives might we be prioritizing prideful appearances over authentic humility?”
4. “What would it look like in our daily lives if we consistently chose the path of genuine humility and authenticity, even if it meant setting aside pride or societal expectations?”
5. “How can we cultivate a heart that leans more towards humility than pride?”

These are challenging questions that require humility to answer them honestly. But it is so important that we are honest when answering these questions; otherwise, we will not change and grow. The answers will make or break us. Why? Because a humble person is always open to learning new things and changing because he or she knows that they don’t know everything and are glad when they learn something new. A prideful person knows everything, is better than everyone else, and will never admit the opposite.

We also need to be clear about what humility is not. Humility is not about having a lowly opinion of ourselves. Biblical humility is about stopping thinking of ourselves and submitting to God. When we care about others, we want to serve them because it is a good thing and brings us joy; that is humility. C.S. Lewis expressed this when he said, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” So, biblical humility is less about lowering yourself and more about lifting others up.

The apostle Paul expresses this in Philippians 2:3-5 when he says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus…”

Notice the emphasis in this Scripture. It does not say, “in humility count yourselves lower than others or less significant than others.” It says that we should “in humility value others above ourselves.” The emphasis is not on our lowness or lack of significance but on focusing on the needs and well-being of others. It says, “count others more significant than yourselves,” not because other people are more valuable than you but because that is the mindset of humility, to help make things better for everyone. This is why Christ was humblest, not because he was lesser than all people but because he cared and came to serve.

We might be wondering, “Do I truly embody humility? Given my yearnings for recognition, can I claim to want to be like Jesus?” That is the struggle we all have, and to deny it is to fall into the trap of pride. But here is the beauty of Christ’s message: We are not expected to be perfect. Our imperfections and our vulnerabilities don’t hinder our journey to Christ. Instead, they are the very reasons we seek him out. In this sense, the first step of humility is wanting and seeking out Jesus. And the first step of pride is logically the opposite: to reject and walk away from God.

Do you recall why Satan was thrown out of heaven? Because he wanted to be like God and sit on God’s throne. He rejected God by putting himself in God’s place. That is what pride does; it makes us believe we are above others, including God, but it destroys instead as Proverbs 11:2 says, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace…”

Isn’t this the message of the movie Aladdin? Though he had all wealth and power, he lost everything, what truly mattered to him, because of his pride and vanity. But when he was honest and humble, as the Scriptures invite us, he was reborn and found genuine love and honor. So, those who submit to God first and look out for the well-being of others are honored by God and prosper.

My friends, true honor is born out of humility. Everyone wishes to leave their mark, to be remembered for something great. The good news is that this isn’t a desire we need to suppress. Our Creator wishes for us to be honored too, but there’s a divine process: first humility, then glory. Remember, the journey of humility is not a diminishing one; it leads to honor. Just as Good Friday’s darkness was followed by Easter Sunday’s glory, humility, too, precedes honor.

Here is the invitation and good news: Let’s choose humility, recognizing it as the fertile ground where faith flourishes, inviting divine blessings not by right but grace. Let’s remember the profound wisdom embedded in our faith: true honor is born out of humility.

But how can we start this journey today? Regularly ask yourself, “In what areas of my life am I prioritizing pride over humility?” Actively seek opportunities to serve others, especially those less fortunate or in need. Begin and end your day with a simple prayer of gratitude and a plea for humility. And remember, just as Good Friday’s darkness led to Easter Sunday’s glory, your moments of humility will undoubtedly lead to divine honor.

So, let’s embrace humility, seeking God’s face and knowing that in doing so, we are not just aligning with God’s will but also unlocking a life full of blessings, satisfaction, and true honor. And when in doubt, let’s draw strength from Christ’s words: “All who humble themselves will be exalted.”